Profile

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Dr B. N. Kalla: an exponent of Sharda script

Out of thousands of scripts written and researched upon in the world and out of these a few hundred found there in India, it should be a cause of concern if only a few scholars remain confined to, and are well versed in, Sharda script. One of such scholars, Dr. B. N. Kalla, lives in Sector 16 of Faridabad. Says Dr. Kalla: "After Brahmi script, Sharda is one of the ancient scripts of India that is believed to have originated, or being in extensive use, from 9th century A.D. In other words Sharda script is an offshoot of North Western Brahmi script. It is the Brahmi script in which some of the edicts of Ashoka have been written.

Dr. Kalla has a research experience of over 25 years and has formerly been the head of the department of Sanskrit in University of Kashmir's Government Oriental College, Baghi Dilawar Khan, Srinagar. He has given an etymology of as many as forty thousand words of Kashmiri in seven volumes of Kashmiri dictionary published by J & K Academy Of Art Culture and Languages Srinagar.. Besides this he has authored many research papers, attended conferences and given lectures on linguistics.

He adds: "Sharda script was very popular in Kashmir in which birth records and Tevas etc. were written. During the ceremony of Yajnopavita the Kulagoru (the family priest) teached the celibate (Bramachari) alphabet of Siddhi Matrika (old form of Sharda) on the wooden piece. (known as Duuj in Kashmiri and Patti in Indian languages). This tradition is prevalent even today. Due to its popularity it crossed the geographical barriers and remained in use for several centuries in the North Western India including Gandhara (an ancient region in N.W. India and E. Afghanistan) or north western Pakistan, Ladakh, Jammu, Himachal Pradesh, Punjab,Delhi and Haryana. The script continued to be used in Himachal Pradesh and Punjab up to the 13th century. After some time it was replaced by Gurumukhi and Takri. The Gurumukhi and Takri scripts are the developed forms of Brahmi.

Dr. Kalla says that the earliest specimens are the legends on the coins of the Utpala dynasty and the fragmentary inscription mentioning the name of Avantiverman. In addition to it, there are two inscriptions of the reign of Queen Didda - one incised on a stone slab dated 992 A.D and the second on the pedestal of Bodhisatva Padampani dated 989 A.D preserved in the Shri Partap Sing Museum, Srinagar.

Dr. Kalla regrets that the Sharda script is being forgotten day by day and a time will come when it will be confined to libraries only. He foresees a situation when the research wings of Archaeological Survey of India (ASI), would be running from post to pillar for want of the epigraphers knowing Sharda script. "It is astonishing that young generation from India, and those specifically from Kashmir are interested more in learning European languages than the one that emanates from their roots.